

VZCZCXRO2835
RR RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHNJ #0325/01 2171459
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 041459Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6361
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 1705
RUEHGI/AMEMBASSY BANGUI 1519
RUEHNK/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 0175
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0915
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 3068

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 NDJAMENA 000325

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR SE WILLIAMSON VISIT TO CHAD

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SUMMARY

11. (SBU) CHAD UNDER PRESSURE: SPECIAL ENVOY FOR SUDAN WILLIAMSON'S VISIT TO N'DJAMENA COMES AS THE RAINY SEASON LULL MASKS CONTINUING TENSION ALONG THE CHAD-SUDANESE BORDER, AS CHADIAN REBELS WHO OPERATE FROM OF SUDAN SANCTUARIES ARE HAMPERED BY WEATHER AND TERRAIN UNFAVORABLE TO THE CHADIAN STYLE OF WARFARE. CHAD CONTINUES TO STRUGGLES TO RECOVER FROM THE EFFECTS OF A FEBRUARY REBEL ASSAULT ON N'DJAMENA AND A LESS DRAMATIC BUT NO LESS AMBITIOUS REBEL ATTACK IN JUNE. SINCE MARCH, A NEW "GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION" THAT INCLUDES FORMER OPPOSITION LEADERS IN PROMINENT POSITIONS HAS UNDERTAKEN TO RESTART DOMESTIC POLITICAL REFORM AND REACH OUT TO ARMED REBEL GROUPS. CHAD AND SUDAN SIGNED A PEACE ACCORD AT DAKAR IN MARCH BUT BROKE RELATIONS AFTER A SUDANESE REBEL ATTACK ON KHARTOUM IN MAY. THIS MONTH, LIBYAN DIPLOMACY CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR BRINGING THE TWO COUNTRIES TO A BILATERAL PEACE PROCESS NOT YET FULLY DEFINED. END SUMMARY.

CHAD-SUDAN

12. CONTINUING TENSION: CHAD HAS ACCUSED SUDAN FOR ARMING AND SUPPLYING THE CHADIAN REBELS WHO HAVE OPERATED FROM SUDAN SANCTUARIES SINCE 2003 AND WHO ATTACKED CHAD FROM BASES IN SUDAN IN FEBRUARY, APRIL, AND IN JUNE. IN MARCH, A PEACE ACCORD BETWEEN CHAD AND SUDAN WAS SIGNED IN DAKAR, SPONSORED BY THE UN, THE AU, AND THE OIC, AND PROVIDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT FROM A CONTACT GROUP OF AFRICAN NATIONS TO DEPLOY A BORDER MONITORING OPERATION ALONG THE CHAD-SUDAN BORDER. IN MARCH, SUDAN ACCUSED CHAD OF BACKING A DARFUR REBEL GROUP'S ATTACK ON KHARTOUM AND BROKE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. CHAD DENIED ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ATTACK AND CLOSED ITS BORDER WITH SUDAN. JUST LAST WEEK, LIBYAN ENVOY ALI TREKKI, AFTER VISITING N'DJAMENA AND KHARTOUM, ANNOUNCED THAT CHAD AND SUDAN HAD ACCEPTED LIBYAN MEDIATION FOR THEIR DIFFERENCES, WOULD REESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC TIES, AND ATTEND A TRIPARTITE SUMMIT TO RESTORE GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THEM.

CHAD REBELS

13. (SBU) AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT: REBEL ATTACKS ON THE CHADIAN CAPITAL IN FEBRUARY CAME CLOSE TO OVERTHROWING THE 18-YEAR OLD REGIME OF PRESIDENT IDRIS DEBY ITNO. DEBY'S FORCES REPULSED THE REBELS, WHO RETIRED IN GOOD ORDER BACK ACROSS THE BORDER TO SUDAN,

THERE TO PLAN FOR FUTURE ACTIONS. THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION PARTIES PROTESTED THE GOC'S DOMESTIC REACTION TO THE ATTACK, INCLUDING WIDESPREAD VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND DETENTION OF OPPOSITION LEADERS; ONE PROMINENT LEADER IS STILL MISSING. ANOTHER LESS DRAMATIC BUT NO LESS AMBITIOUS REBEL OFFENSIVE IN JUNE WAS DEFEATED BY GOVERNMENT FORCES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN CHAD, FOLLOWING A LOWER-PROFILE REBEL ATTACK ON THE BORDER IN APRIL, ALSO DEFEATED BY THE CHADIAN ARMY.

POLITICAL REFORM AND A NEW GOVERNMENT

14. (SBU) ELECTORAL REFORM AND INQUIRY ON FEBRUARY. THE GOVERNMENT MADE CONCESSIONS TO THE OPPOSITION'S SUSPENSION OF ITS PARTICIPATION IN AN ELECTORAL REFORM PROCESS BEGUN LAST AUGUST BY NAMING A "COMMISSION D'ENQUETE" ("COMMISSION OF INQUIRY") TO INVESTIGATE THE AFTERMATH OF THE REBEL ATTACKS AND FOLLOWED THAT BY NAMING A NEW CABINET THAT INCLUDES PROMINENT OPPOSITION LEADERS IN IMPORTANT MINISTRIES AND WHOSE PRIME MINISTER - YOUSSEF SALEH ABBAS -- HAS PROMISED TO LEAD A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE, WHILE REACHING OUT TO ARMED REBEL GROUPS WITH OFFERS OF PEACEFUL REINTEGRATION INTO CHADIAN POLITICAL LIFE. SEVERAL REBEL GROUPS HAVE RENOUNCED VIOLENCE AND RALLIED TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT, BUT MOST OF THE LEADING REBEL CHIEFTAINS HAVE NOT. THE NEW PRIME MINISTER HAS ALSO CONTINUED CHAD'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DAKAR PEACE ACCORD.

15. (SBU) UNDER THE NEW GOVERNMENT: THE OPPOSITION RESPONDED TO THE NEW PM'S PROGRAM BY RETURNING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE ELECTORAL REFORM AGREEMENT SIGNED IN AUGUST 2007 AND CALLED THE AUGUST 13 ACCORD. THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY WILL PRESENT ITS FINAL REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT LATER THIS WEEK. THE ELECTORAL REFORM PROCESS, INSTITUTIONALIZED IN THE BI-PARTISAN "COMITE DE SUIVI"

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("IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE") HAS RESTARTED ITS WORK, PROPOSING NECESSARY ENABLING LEGISLATION TO PARLIAMENT TO CREATE AN INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION, CARRY OUT DEMOGRAPHIC AND ELECTORAL CENSUSES, AND OTHER MEASURES. THE WORK OF BOTH THE COMMISSION AND THE COMITE IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY THE EU AND FRANCE. LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNAL ELECTIONS ARE EXPECTED IN 2009 AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN 2011.

FRIENDS OF CHAD

16. (SBU) INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT TO CHAD: THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, CONCERNED ABOUT THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION CREATED BY THE DAFUR CRISIS - CHAD HOSTS 250,000 DAFURI AND 50,000 CENTRAL AFRICAN REFUGEES, PLUS 200,000 CHADIAN IDPS - AND ENCOURAGED BY THE PROSPECT OF PROGRESS TOWARD DEMOCRACY, HAS RENEWED ITS SUPPORT FOR CHAD. THE DAKAR ACCORD PEACE PROCESS HAS ACTIVE SUPPORT BEYOND THE SPONSORS AND CONTACT GROUP -- THE EU, FRANCE, LIBYA, AND OTHERS. THERE ARE TWO UNSC-SANCTIONED PKOS IN CHAD. THE EUROPEAN UNION HAS FULLY DEPLOYED ITS MILITARY PEACEKEEPING FORCE - EUFOR - TO EASTERN CHAD TO PROTECT THE REFUGEE CAMPS, HUMANITARIAN WORKERS, AND UN POLICE TRAINERS. THE UN POLICE TRAINING OPERATION - MINURCAT - HAS ALSO CONTINUED TO DEPLOY BEHIND EUFOR, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE UNSYG'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE, VICTOR ANGELO. THE FRENCH HAVE CONTINUED THEIR MILITARY COOPERATION WITH CHAD, INCLUDING PROVISION OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND SHARING OF INTELLIGENCE, AS HAVE IN MORE LIMITED WAYS BOTH CHINA AND LIBYA.

THE U.S. CONTRIBUTION

17. (SBU) U.S. SUPPORT TO CHAD: THE UNITED STATES CONTINUES TO PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT TO CHAD. WE CONTRIBUTE NEARLY HALF OF ALL/ALL ASSISTANCE TO THE DAFURI REFUGEES AND MUCH TO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REFUGEES AND CHADIAN IDP'S AS WELL. WE SUPPORT THE DAKAR ACCORD, SENDING REPRESENTATIVES TO THE LAST CONTACT GROUP MEETING. WE HAVE SUPPORTED EUFOR AND MINURCAT DIPLOMATICALLY AND HAVE CONTRIBUTED USD TWO MILLION TO THE LATTER'S TRUST FUND. WE ARE POSED

TO RESTART OUR SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOCUSSED ON COUNTERTERRORISM. WE HAVE CONTRIBUTED FINANCIALLY TO THE ELECTORAL REFORM PROCESS AND HAVE SUPPORTED MEDIA TRAINING PROGRAMS TO ENABLE LOCAL MEDIA TO PLAY A ROLE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. A CONSORTIUM OF EXXON MOBIL, CHEVRON, AND PETRONAS HAVE INVESTED IN THE CHAD-CAMEROON PETROLEUM PIPELINE PROJECT, WHICH CURRENTLY EXPORTS ABOUT 130,000 BARRELS OF CHADIAN OIL THROUGH CAMEROON, WHICH EARNED CHAD MORE THAN USD 1.3 BILLION IN 2007.

CHAD FACTS

18. (U) THE REPUBLIC OF CHAD IS ABOUT TWICE THE SIZE OF TEXAS, WITH A POPULATION ESTIMATED AT 10 MILLION. THE CAPITAL IS N'DJAMENA, WITH ABOUT ONE MILLION INHABITANTS. CHAD IS DIVIDED INTO THREE BIOCLIMATIC ZONES: THE NORTH IS SAHARAN, HIGH DESERT AND PARTLY MOUNTAINOUS, WITH ANNUAL RAINFALL OF LESS THAN EIGHT INCHES PER YEAR; THE CENTRAL PART IS SAHELIAN, A LARGELY ARID CENTRAL PLAIN OF STEPPE AND OPEN SAVANNA, WITH RAINFALL OF ABOUT 24 INCHES PER YEAR; THE SOUTH HAS MORE FERTILE LOWLANDS OF WOODLAND SAVANNA AND DECIDUOUS FORESTS, WITH NEARLY 40 INCHES OF RAINFALL PER YEAR. CHADIANS BELONG TO SOME 200 DISTINCT ETHNIC GROUPS. IN THE NORTH AND CENTER, THERE ARE GORANE (TOUBOU, DAZA, KREDA SUBGROUPS), ZAGHAWA, KANEMBOU, OUADDAI, ARAB, BAGUIRMI, HADJERAI, AND MABA, MOST OF WHOM ARE MUSLIM. IN THE SOUTH, SARA (NGAMBAYE, MBAYE, GOULAYE SUBGROUPS), MOUDANG, MOUSSEI, AND MASSA, MOST OF WHOM ARE CHRISTIAN OR ANIMIST, PREDOMINATE. ABOUT 1,000 FRENCH CITIZENS LIVE IN CHAD.

19. (U) RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IS TRADITIONAL IN CHAD: THE STATE DESCRIBES ITSELF AS NON-CONFESSIONAL; SOME 50 PERCENT OF CHADIANS ARE MUSLIM AND 35 PERCENT ARE CHRISTIAN, WHILE THE REST FOLLOW INDIGENOUS BELIEF SYSTEMS. FRENCH AND ARABIC ARE THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES; THERE ARE MORE THAN 120 INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS. ADULT LITERACY IS 48 PERCENT. LIFE EXPECTANCY IS ESTIMATED AT 47.2 YRS. THE INFANT MORTALITY RATE IS 10.2 PERCENT. ABOUT 80 PERCENT OF CHADIANS ARE SUBSISTENCE FARMERS OR HERDERS. CHAD'S GDP IS USD 6.5 BILLION. OF CHAD'S NATURAL RESOURCES ONLY PETROLEUM AND NATRON (SODIUM CARBONATE) ARE CURRENTLY COMMERCIALY EXPLOITED. CHAD EXPORTS OIL, COTTON, LIVESTOCK, AND GUM ARABIC.

110. (U) THE BASIS FOR CHAD'S GOVERNMENT IS THE 1996 CONSTITUTION. A STRONG EXECUTIVE BRANCH HEADED BY THE PRESIDENT DOMINATES THE

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CHADIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM. THE PRESIDENT HAS THE POWER TO APPOINT THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE COUNCIL OF STATE (OR CABINET), AND EXERCISES CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE OVER APPOINTMENTS OF JUDGES, GENERALS, PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS AND HEADS OF CHAD'S PARASTATAL FIRMS. IN CASES OF GRAVE AND IMMEDIATE THREAT, THE PRESIDENT, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT AND COUNCIL OF STATE, MAY DECLARE A STATE OF EMERGENCY. IN MAY 2004, THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY VOTED TO ABOLISH PRESIDENTIAL TERM LIMITS, WHICH WAS APPROVED IN A NATIONAL REFERENDUM OF JUNE 2005.